

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 774

By Camper

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Fred Jones, Jr., founder of the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration, for his outstanding community contributions.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those individuals who, through their extraordinary efforts, have touched the lives of thousands and have distinguished themselves as remarkable leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Fred Jones, Jr., a veteran of the national entertainment industry, owner/limited partner of the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, and highly respected member of the Memphis community who founded the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration in 1990; and

WHEREAS, when Fred Jones, Jr., originally conceived of the idea of two well-matched southern football teams squaring off in an annual grudge match, he knew it would draw tens of thousands of fans from across the region, but the success of the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration has exceeded his original vision beyond his dreams; and

WHEREAS, emboldened by the cause to help fund worthy educational institutions and encouraged by growing attendance, Fred Jones, Jr., has added many activities to the football game since its launch twenty years ago; and

WHEREAS, attracting fans from across the country, many of whom schedule family vacations and reunions around the annual football game, the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration has developed into a weekend incorporating numerous events, including a fashion show, concerts, a golf tournament, tailgate parties, a coaches luncheon, a battle of the bands, and much more; and

WHEREAS, Fred Jones, Jr., never doubted that the Memphis community would support the event; growing up in the Cleaborne Homes housing project in the Memphis area, he worked during the day and went to school at night to earn his college degree from Memphis State University in 1971; recognizing that the support of his family and friends was vital to that achievement, he wanted others to have that same support and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, having discovered a knack for putting together entertainers with large audiences in the most attractive venues, Mr. Jones blended that talent with his love for education and for helping the community to which he himself was so grateful; from that combination, and a wealth of experience, the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration was born; and

WHEREAS, Fred Jones, Jr.'s experience includes associations with a roster of legendary talent, including Isaac Hayes, The Isley Brothers, Prince, Bill Cosby, The Commodores, Stevie Wonder, Parliament-Funkadelic, Luther Vandross, LL Cool J, Count Basie, Tyler Perry, Jill Scott, Maze featuring Frankie Beverly, The O'Jays, Usher, and hundreds more; and

WHEREAS, he also assembled national blues and jazz tours for several international companies but considers his most fulfilling business endeavor to be the Southern Heritage Classic; and

WHEREAS, in reflecting upon his many professional achievements, Mr. Jones observed, "I've had a lot of fun throughout my career and I've had the pleasure to work with hundreds of fascinating, talented people. But there is no thrill for me bigger than getting to hand Jackson State University and Tennessee State University checks every year after the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration and knowing that money will be used by schools that really need and deserve the assistance."; and

WHEREAS, the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration brings tens of thousands of fans to the Memphis area and is broadcast to millions of cable and satellite television subscribers on a host of sports networks, including SportSouth and the Armed Forces Network, which airs the event in 175 countries and U.S. territories as well as 140 U.S. Navy ships at sea; and

WHEREAS, while the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration has seen incredible growth during its twenty-year existence, it still retains the warmth and feel that is so characteristic of events in the Memphis area; Fred Jones, Jr.'s ability to sustain such an experience for attendees is one reason he has earned recognition from a host of prestigious organizations; and

WHEREAS, his most recent honors include being named the 12th most influential African-American in the State by *Business Tennessee* magazine and the 2007 Citizen of the Year by the Epsilon Phi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, he was also awarded the 2006 Circle of Honor from the Memphis Black Business Association and was inducted into The Society of Entrepreneurs in 2006; in addition, he received the 2005 Entrepreneur of the Year Award from the National Alliance of Market Developers and the 2004 Kate Gooch Award for Service to the Community from Leadership Memphis; and

WHEREAS, this outstanding gentleman has also been inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame for Memphis City Schools and received the 2002 Award of Excellence from the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Fund, the 2001 Dr. R. Q. Venson Pioneer Award from the Memphis Kemet Jubilee, Inc., and the 2000 Outstanding Community Sales Award from the Sales and Marketing Executives of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, the prominence of the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration, and the reason for its success, rests on how it connects kindred spirits - young and old - in celebration of the beauty of cultural diversity and the richness of Memphis heritage; for his exceptional vision in founding this outstanding event, Fred Jones, Jr., should be appropriately honored; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby recognize and honor Fred Jones, Jr., founder of the Southern Heritage Classic Celebration, for his valuable contributions to this State and this Nation and commend him for his hard work and determination in ensuring the event's overwhelming success year after year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.